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# Her Captive Bandit;

## Or, In the Lion's Lair

### By Colonel Harper Hamilton

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CHAPTER I.

TAKING THE LION.

RACKLEY GOLD, road-agent, camp-robber, came along the upper slope of a ridge with quick steps, though he disdained to run. He was hunted by other men, and capture meant swift punishment. His way was not liked along Tiger-foot Range, and Sheriff Lane and his posse intended to stop the way and the man.

Hunted, Rackley Gold was supremely at his ease. He knew what capture meant, and wanted to avoid it, but he never lost his nerve for a moment. More, having a philosophical turn of mind, he was interested in the chase from another cause. He studied the pursuit with the acumen of an expert.

"Their last move was well-planned," he presently said, looking back. "It is time they used some judgment, and the sending of the red-headed man through the cross-gulch was judicious. If they had done it before there would be less cause to complain, but better late than never. On the whole, it is a tolerably good campaign. Wonder what they will do when they find I have doubled?"

With the danger growing nearer, and the situation enough to keep a different man in headlong flight, Rackley stood at a point where he could observe well, and watched the progress of his foes. A sweeping glance by one of their number would have discovered him at once, but he was indifferent to this fact.

"Hallo!" he presently ejaculated. "They have found the hidden passage, so they divide and a part of them swing around this way. Well, now, they are sharper than I thought. Good boys!"

His expression first told of real admiration, and then he laughed lightly but with sincerity. He liked a good play, even with the game going against himself.

He waited no longer. To wait would have been suicide. Turning, he broke into a run and went rapidly along the ridge, but if it had been a foot-race for pleasure he would not have been more at his ease. As he looked at it, the greater the danger the more interesting the chase.

Behind him were determined men, and system, speed and partial knowledge of the way. The pursuers spread out and, clearly marking the trail, proceeded with the work

of running their quarry down. Rackley Gold sent a look across the ridge, shaped his course and added to his speed. Now he was where the nature of the way prevented secret doubling and the other tricks of flight by the usual manner. He heard even the sheriff and his followers achieve, they had sensed quarry and it, also, wrenched when was on.

As yet they had not sighted him, but he left a plain trail and it was enough. He ran, they followed, and so ten minutes elapsed, but he held them safely and was happy. The spirit of the race, as well as the exertion of it, set his blood leaping faster. It was a field-day for the outlaw of Tiger-foot Range. Except for the disagreeable fact that they would shoot him off-hand he would have passed to contentment. He was free. This held him inarguably.

Presently he reached a slope where he had a course through tangled bushes. Half-way through he came upon a sheep in difficulty. Hard run at some previous time, possibly a fortnight before, it had been caught in the bushes by the head and held captive. Thus far it had not suffered keenly, but it was near to the end. And, as it turning its eyes upon Rackley Gold, it sent forth a piteous cry.

The road-agent promptly paused. He drew his knife, sleighed away at the bushes, severed several of the stems that held the tree. Forgetting to give thanks, it started off.

"Wait!" said Rackley compassedly. "One of those thorny things is going to your wool."

He took two steps after the animal, plucked away the bush, smiled a trifle as he saw the blood beneath it. Then he set to work to push his own theirs and his fight for life.

The delay, slight as it was, had been bad for him. The pursuers were over a mile out of land and only luck prevented them from seeing him at once. He ran on, partially doubled, for he could, at any time, be a target for bullets. To Rackley it grew more and more evident that he was not one of the party carried a rope. Knowing what it was for, he had prayed and planned made a fact that if it was used that day it would not be on himself.

A surprise soon in store for him. A new sound suddenly floated on the air and he knew that it was the baying of a hound. It had been the boy of a hound, and softer notes followed the first. The one was that of a new hunting, and Rackley disapproved of it.

"I'm disappointed in Sheriff Snow!" he said confidently. "He should have had more sense than a hunter has to rely upon a dog for his quarry. He should have had a rope, one of the party carried a rope. Knowing what it was for, he should have planned and made a fact that if it was used that day it would not be on himself."

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Once more increasing his speed the fugitive swung to the right, down hill, while the bay of the hound and the shouts of the men behind told him that the sheriff had not lost sight of him. He knew it of old, and trees for landmarks, his horse-sense and keen face grew set and keen, and he put every atom of muscle and speed into his work. But all in vain. The man in his path lay a wide chasm from edge to edge, and with a fearful five hundred feet below.

Unswerving, he took it like a mountain goat; he leaped, left the air for a moment, hovered between life and death and finally landed safely on the other side. He stumbled, then recovered his pace, and then rose, smiling.

"Always thought I could do it!" quoth he.

Tottering two hundred feet he sat down beside a rocky uplift and waited serenely. A few seconds elapsed, then hound and man came wildly along the back-track. They had passed with the hound and ran well until the chasm barred their way; then all panted gulping abruptly. They saw where they saw the gulf, and no man aspired to test his leaping ability there. The dog stood ruffled, nervous of muscle but alert of eye. He thrust out his nose and bayed resentfully. He and his masters looked and saw the sitting man. Rackley waved his hand nonchalantly.

"Try to see you duck, jump it, Snow!" he called out cheerily.

The four pursuers took on fresh life. Feet were shifted, bodies moved and arms were flung about nervously. They had no disposition to jump with a little chasm-footed fugitive that was, nor to be half-pelted-to-death with him. Their movements took on practical form and rifles were lifted. Then Rackley Gold waved his hand again, squirmed behind the uplift, and it was all over.

"Jail," muttered the road-agent. "Those chaps have no sense of humor."

He knew it would be half an hour before they could work around the big ravine, and as he tired of the chase, he took measures to end it. Then, at a point two or two miles away, and as far as he could see, sitting at ease he smoked and ruminated on his fate.

"Show is all well enough," was his final decision, "but locks the groundwork of success. He will never make his mark in the world. He will be shot or hanged before long. It was a pleasant afternoon, and I'd like to thank him for the entertainment, still, sometime."

Rackley had been living, in some quarters, of being a desperate man, but he did not look it. His face was fine, his eyes expressive, his mouth sensitive. He had brutality when sharply hunted, and seemed capable of doing so again, but the faces revealed no devil's spirit, no repose that was strong, firm and bold, and the jaw was square to an extreme. If he fought, he was unyielding, he was surely grim and over-full of force, yet he had the kindly look of a dreamer.

His hair and thick mustache were black; his complexion darker than the average; he was a handsome young man, tall, and in his broad shoulders and long, thick arms showed signs of strength. He had been told of him that he was a rather fine-looking animal. He had taught himself, by objective agreed with others as to the noun, and the name of Rackley Gold was a verbal shock along the line of fame. He was dressed in rough garments, his shirt of flannel, his blue bandana tied at the throat, his wrist of fine buckskin. The latter was loosely fringed, long that they might play in every chance breeze. This handkerchief was almost as widely known as its wearer. Indeed, nobody could see it and not write it not seeing the flutter of the bright ends in unlighted, he could not have smelled it, they also saw the handkerchief.

Rackley, sitting on the high ground, rose and wandered on idly. He liked nature, and liked the range where he elected to live, but the beauty of tree and flower, the sublime grandeur of rock were lost upon him on this occasion. His mind, unfortunately, was half-forgetful of surrounding things.

Suddenly, however, he arrived at a decision.

"I'll do it tonight!" he exclaimed. "It will show Sheriff Snow that I have not a fear for his little man-hunts. Wonder if he will stay in the saddle all night?"

Laughing heartily, he changed his course and walked along the edge of the gulf, and a rocky wall that fronted one side of a gulch. In the gulch was a beaten way. It was the bed of the stage-road that came from the north Gideon Gap to Clover Valley, two hundred miles away, and it was the main road of the range.

Rackley surveyed the gulch with the eye of an expert. He had an idea, and, as it was purely in the line of his calling, he was much in love with it. Then—in his path moved farther to the west, and, finding a suitable spot, he crossed the gulf. Here he had noted a thicket at one side. Entering that, he made his way to the road and reconnoitered. Then he returned to the mountain with equal serenity and began work.

He did not believe in lengthy bargains when he supplied his larder and tobacco pouch.

Night fell, but Rackley lingered in the cave. He loaded his pistols and rifle with serenity, patiently. He was waiting for a certain hour. Finally it arrived and he became his rose, touched his revolver and knife from the force of habit and sauntered from the cover. Then he walked to the gulch, once more he descended the cliff, once more he reached a sticker.

He had work for the night. The Gideon Gap stage carried a little money, enough to hold it up. The money and watches of the passengers were of passive interest; the chance to exhibit his nerve by a hold-up when it was least to be looked for was of keen interest.

Taking position in the thicket where he had on the lookout previously, he seated himself and relapsed into a picture of repose. There he intended to wait for the stage.

The night was dark, and he could see nothing but blackness, hear nothing but almost complete, but the leaves rustled slightly in the wind. Ten minutes passed; then he heard a sound up the gulch.

"Rather early for it," he remarked. "I wonder if it is it."

He rose, took a step and gazed into the darkness, his face turned to the point from which the stage must come. Then something happened. A thing fell upon his head and shoulders, a thing that descended with a scurrying web that wrapped him around, and Rackley knew it cause the weight of hands and arms.

The man knew he was trapped. Enmeshed in a blanket, hostile arms pinioned his own members and fettered him of freedom. In a moment or two he was thus, he leaped vehemently, putting out all his strength and seeking to free himself loose. The stillness of the gulch fled. Bushes were trampled down, and a knot of men swayed back and forth like a human whirlpool in conflict. It was a fight for liberty, perhaps for life, and all of Rackley's prowess powers were put forth to baffle his foes.

The fight was unsuccessful. The ambushers held fast and the clinging blanket never fell away. The great arms of the road-agent were of no use to him, and he time was practically beaten at the start. Then he made one end of his body free, held and bound.

When that was accomplished he ceased to struggle, and accepted his lot with outward composure. Inwardly, the lion was untamed.

With unexpected thoughtfulness a slit was cut to allow him more air. Then he was swung upon the back of a horse that had been brought from a distance, the animal moved and he was borne away captive.

He could see nothing. The blanket covered his head. He said nothing, and he heard no word uttered by his captors. The procession went, he knew not where.

For the first time in his life Rackley Gold was a prisoner.

As he rode he planned. Taken, he did not escape a trial. Judge Lynch would probably decide his fate, as far as possible. Yet, Rackley believed that the blanket would be removed when all was ready to fasten the rope to his neck, and he did not intend to be passive. He had only a chance, but while his strength could be brought into play, it his mind could remain clear, he still had a dauntless heart, the end might not be as planned. Not one of his captors knew what he was thinking, contemplated. Time might yet learn.

Rackley planned it all as he rode—the fight, the victory, the escape. He was eager for it, keen for it, longed for the chance having. Some would be hurt on the other side, of course, and they might not appreciate his principles, but that was the fortune of war. He rather admired their clever work in finding him, they ought to congratulate him on his coming escape.

Then, in spite of freedom—that was the all-engrossing subject in his mind—

The ride ended at last. The horses were checked, and then his captors dismounted. Next, he was carried into a building. This was not, as he had expected, a cave, but a mained passive. Taken somewhere, he was seated in a chair. Footsteps sounded. There was passing here and there, and then the utter darkness was a little broken and he knew a lamp had been lighted.

Something touched his garments and the blanket began to fall. He felt himself free, but no voice sounded, and the cover was not lifted from his head. He waited a moment; then stirred, flung off the blanket, and, with every muscle tense for the affray, looked for his enemies about him.

He saw a young woman sewing serenely at a table, and—nobody else.

## CHAPTER II.

### A FAIR KIDNAPER.

A room in a dwelling-house, rather well furnished, cosy and homelike, a neat little table near which a lamp was burning, and a young woman sewing on a dainty fabric that looked like silk. Rackley Gold saw, and no more.

The girl was bending her head intent on her work; she gazed only at the fabric and the needle, and did not once lift her eyes to the face of the outlaw who was staking all his life. His muscles, stiffened for a fight, were relaxed, his nerves were larger than usual. Doubting the evidence of his vision until it was proved by touch, he looked about him. Then he said:

"I have arrived!" replied Rackley frankly. "Still, it wasn't a deep scheme. I wouldn't for the life of me take away credit from a successful triumph, but the simplicity of the scheme suggests that if luck and my careers should fail me, I might try it myself some new be free. Such a suggestion is to be frowned upon. You tried; you got it. Results, not theories, talk. You're having got me, what then?"

"Wait!" said Burdilla serenely. "This is a new lair for the mountain lion."

"Keep me?"

"Yes."

"As cook, hostler or bugle-blower?"

"No work will be required of you. You will just stay here and watch. That's all."

Rackley smoothed his mustache slowly and thoughtfully. He had given no thought about his staying if he was given chance to leave. Something else soon took up his attention, however.

"So the trap was yours?"

"Wholly."

"Ah!" said Rackley thoughtfully. "A pretty good job. The only flaw I see is that you did not spring the trap when I first entered the chicken, but I won't be hard on a successful worker. You will, you've brought me here. We are alone. What's to hinder me leaving?"

"I have a revolver in my lap."

"If you're going to shoot," inquired the prisoner with grave deliberation, "which end would you present to the target?"

"It would be the last end you'd see."

"You might hit a mirror or the ceiling."

"I should hit you."

She spoke with composed confidence, and Rackley broke into a laugh.

"This grows interesting," he declared. "I believe you can shoot, after all. Well, suppose I don't try to hold—"

"Why, then you can stay."

"Stay—forever?"

"On the ranch."

The road-agent ran four big fingers through his thick black hair. He was perplexed. His expression announced the fact, and he did not mind it. He had learned his fair companion keenly, analytically, appreciating for clear, but found none.

"I'm stampeded!" he announced. "Stay on the ranch! You are cattle and horses, and likewise human parties who work for a living. I'm not an ox or a horse, and I tell not understand why you want me on the ranch? I don't savvy."

The young woman forward and rested a well-rounded elbow on the table. This brought her nearer to him and he noted that she had extremely fine eyes—large, calm, commanding eyes. He could believe the current story of her as ruling the Burdilla ranch with an iron rule, and that no cowboy would dare to defy her, since Clarke's curse. Yet, strong as her nature was, she was womanly and pretty.

"Naturally," she said, her manner matter-of-fact, "you feel an interest in this matter, and I will explain. You have been hearing about Rackley Gold. At first it was here, Rackley Gold, there, Rackley Gold, but later it developed that he was reckless, remarkably successful, full of cunning, rather a dashing figure, and altogether a will-o'-the-wisp. Officers hunted for him in vain. Sheriff Snow was the first to be here he was there. If judged to be there, he was somewhere else. Sheriff after sheriff took up the trail, followed at full speed and—failed. I got tired of it. What was this Rackley Gold that he could not be caught? Man, goblin, phantom or whatever? I was determined to find out, and I found him. I tried. You know the rest."

"I have nothing to say," said Rackley frankly. "Still, it wasn't a deep scheme. I wouldn't for the life of me take away credit from a successful triumph, but the simplicity of the scheme suggests that if luck and my careers should fail me, I might try it myself some new be free. Such a suggestion is to be frowned upon. You tried; you got it. Results, not theories, talk. You're having got me, what then?"

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"Say!" he exclaimed, "do you know what sort of a fool you have cooped?"

Burdilla smiled as if much amused.

"Tell me!" she directed.

"My home," explained the road-agent, "is in the mountain fastnesses, but I occasionally get a trifle outside my beat. If I go near a house or shack, where I am known and a miner or rancher has his family there, the women sometimes clutch at their babies and drag them inside and shut the door lest Rackley Gold eat them up."

"I am not surprised," she responded, nodding her sleepily head. "I have heard people talk about you."

"And you dare have such a person here—I don't mean in your house, but on your ranch?"

"Haven't I brought you?"

"And you are not afraid?"

"No. Why should I be?"

"On what do you pin your belief in your safety?"

She lifted a revolver and laid it on the table.

"On this, and on my armed men!" she evenly replied.

"Ah!" murmured Rackley, shaking his head. "Not logical. Victory is to him who shoots the quickest. Put one man among a hundred and let him know his business and he can drop from six to twelve before they get him."

We will pass that over. It hardly interests me."

"What the deuce do you want of me, anyhow?" the outlaw demanded abruptly.

My woman's curiosity is back of it all. Hearing so much about Rackley Gold I grew wishful to see what he was like. Was he merely human or the reverse? What sort of a creature was this that roamed Tiger-foot Range at his will, robbing here and there, hunted, but never caught! And why not caught? Why did a sheriff, with picked men at his back, fail every time? Why did Rackley Gold slip through their fingers, proof against all sorts of traps, and pass on his way, laughing at them? I was ashamed of them. I thought it possible to capture the road-agent, and vowed to do it. But when I had succeeded, what then? Deliver him up to his fate? He would be hanged, and I should be party to it. I didn't like the idea. What then? Why, there was no way but to make it an affair between Rackley Gold and myself. I've done it. I proved that I could capture him. You are here."

The outlaw had listened with grave attention. Absolutely forgetting that he was himself under discussion, he followed her reasoning closely, weighing it analytically.

At the finish he nodded several times.

"I am undoubtedly here," he admitted. "That secret—"

"I shall keep you!"

"Bound!"

"Free from all bonds."

"Ah!" murmured Rackley, smiling, and the smile was free from all offense. "How long am I to stay?"

"Perhaps a fortnight, perhaps a month, or perhaps a week."

"Isn't the plan a bit quixotic?"

"It pleases me."

"My leave has not been asked. Suppose I say, I'll go to-day?"

"That is not to be considered. Having kidnaped you I have no intention of being baffled. You are here to stay!"

CHAPTER III.

WANTED BY SOMEBODY ELSE.

Rackley Gold meditated before he spoke again. Fertile of projects under ordinary circumstances, he was now at a loss. What had been said was strange enough, and eccentric enough, but it sat down as a jest, but though Burdilla was serene of manner, there was that in her voice which told him that she was in earnest. The outlaw tried to grasp the situation, but failed. Finally it was too unique for his analytical powers.

While he considered, she suddenly spoke again.

"Why have you followed such a life?" she demanded.

"What sort of a life?" he inquired.

"I did not have the honesty of it in mind, but the situation from your own standpoint. For years you have been a hunted man."

Rackley's eyes brightened, and he showed unusual animation.

"Fact!" he agreed.

"Officers of the law have chased you, and fired upon you."

"They have!" he agreed, smiling almost buoyantly.

"You have been hit by bullets."

"Two or three times."

"Driven from cover to cover, from valley to range, hunted like a wild animal—"

"Yes, yes!" he cried enthusiastically.

"Besieged in caves and—"

"I have rested in caves, and stood them off from there," he exulted.

"Every man's hand is against you; you live a solitary life, only knowing a moment's peace, and never knowing when a fatal bullet may reach you, always hunted, always in peril. What a life!"

Burdilla used plain words, but she did not seem to realize how she did not look shocked, nor did she shiver or turn pale, nor shrink from him. She was calm now of manner, direct of speech, and as unconcerned as if discussing the price of a cowpony.

"What a life!" she repeated.

"Grand, isn't it?" cried Rackley, still enthusiastic.

"Do you like it?"

"Why, of course I do. Who wouldn't?"

"Why do you like it?"

"Why?" he repeated, an atom at a loss. "Why? Oh! as to that, you have just told why. The excitement, the danger—"

"Excitement! And of being hunted like a wild beast! Are you sane? I cannot understand."

"Let me explain!" he interrupted quickly. "Consider what you have said! I live as I live, and I am hunted. My enemies may come upon me at any moment of the day or night. My wits against theirs, you see. They come in all sorts of ways, singly or by stealth, or in numbers and more openly. They use all sorts of devices, ruses, and I don't know what else. Let me see! Wolf-traps, dead-falls, powder-mines—but why dwell upon it? I am here, and—but"—here he stretched out his big arms—"I have beaten them all!"

"And you like such a life?"

"What can compare with it? My wits against theirs, I repeat. When the range seems clear I tread with a bold step, but with watchful eyes. I am like a lynx, and when the race is hot and bullets fly—why, man, that is worth living!"

"Suppose you were shot down?" she asked. "I mean, fatally shot?"

"I never have been. Such a thing would end a merry life."

"I can't see it as you do. To me the life seems horrible—and you like it! Why, in my wildest dreams of Rackley Gold I never thought of this. With whom do you associate?"

"Nobody! I have no kin that I know of, and so-called friends are often dangerous. They may betray well, and yet do a pile of harm."

"And you have no friend?"

"Not one," replied Rackley, with the air of a very fortunate man.

"Not even a dog?"

"A dog!" repeated the outlaw, plainly in disgust. "I detest dogs. When a hunter is so feeble-minded that he cannot kill his game does not like to take a dog to do it, and then himself does the shooting and finishing. The dog can't help you in a row, but even he is no great shakes. No dog for me!"

"If you had one would he not help save you from your foes?"

"I don't need help!" asserted Rackley quickly. "If I did I should not be worth existing. The life is the best possible one to enjoy life. My wits against the rest of the world."

"You talk readily for a man who has no associates. I should think your powers of speech would fail you."

"Oh! I see folks now and then. I wander far, and sometimes meet people who don't recognize me. Sometimes—often—I sit by a miner's door, or a rancher's, and he, and his wife, and the children"—the speaker smiled a trifle—"talk with me. Why, the children climb over me, and pull my hair, and hit me in the face. Odd little tots, they are!"

"It seems to me that, for a solitary man, you have singular diversions."

"I get what I want," explained Rackley, with a short nod.

Here was something Burdilla could understand, and she meditated upon it intently. Of the many strange things connected with Rackley Gold, the strangest was the road-agent in a doorway with babies playing on him. Nice pictures, thought she in outline, did not seem to fit the man. Crime and innocence were not natural companions.

Rackley did not interrupt her meditations, but when she looked up, the clock on the shelf struck the hour she aroused with a slight start.

"Will you go to your room now?" she asked.

"My room?"

"Yes. As you have yourself said, my father's is a lonely world, and his trying illness compels us to keep a houseful of servants. We are crowded already. Your room will be in the adjoining building, the home of our foreman, Adam Hunt."

"You say I am to be free from bonds?"

"Wholly!"

"Suppose I take advantage of the chance and escape?"

"It is impossible," she answered composedly. "Maybe you know we ranchers need a troubled life at the foot of the range. There is plenty to keep that it amounts to war. To preserve our property we keep armed men. In addition, at the time, Even at night they ride the outskirts. You could not come there, Rackley Gold, for you would be shot."

"What will be done with me tomorrow?"

"You can come and go as you please, though no farther than my line of armed men. I repeat that there is no escape for you."

"How long am I to stay?"

"Oh!" she carelessly returned. "Maybe a week or a month, more or less. I am reminded that you will not be troubled by them while here. It was I who kidnaped you, so I will be bound to protect you from other foes. Sheriff Snow will not molest you, for you are his guest, and while not to betray you, and I am absolute mistress of their minds. Your stay will be peaceful."

Rackley was on the point of bluntly demanding that was wanted of him, but he checked the impulse. Quick as his wits were, he felt a desire to do some thinking before matters went further. Delay would give him chance for a gamble, and—to another of Burdilla's traits that would be a gamble new to him, strange, perplexing, humbling, fascinating.

Burdilla arose, went to the window, called and then quickly shut it. A door, also opened, an alert, middle-aged man entered, gave a glance at the road-agent, and then faced the young lady.

"Mr. Hunt," she said, her manner matter-of-fact, "you are to conduct my guest to his room."

"Yes, Miss Clarke," replied the man.

"Ready, stranger?"

"Ready!" said Rackley.

He gained his feet, said "Good night!" to Burdilla, and then followed Hunt out of doors. He was keenly attentive to all things, but his guide walked on quietly.

"Dark night," remarked the foreman.

"Decidedly so."


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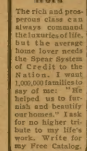
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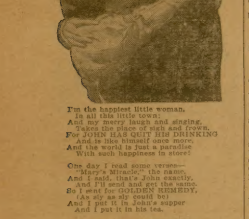
# Since John Quit Drinking

BY JOHN'S WIFE.



I'm the happiest little woman,
In all this little town;
And my merry laugh is ringing
Like a clear bell's silvery sound.
For JOHN HAS QUIT HIS DRINKING
And is now himself once more,
And the world is just a paradise
Such as happiness is for.

One day I read some verses—
"Mary's Miracle," the name;
And I said, that's John all exactly,
And I'll send and get the same.
For I KNEW THAT SOMEBODY,
Besides my self could tell
And I put it in John's supper
And I put it in his tea.

And it didn't taste a little bit;
Had no odor, so, you see—
It was absolutely free of coffee
For little Doctor Hee.
And I waited, and I prayed and waited,
For a month (days seemed so long),
And I didn't have the greatest faith,
But was ashamed now to confess.

And John never thought a minute,
He was being cured of drink,
And now he is as well as any one,
It makes me cry to think!
Just makes me cry for gladness,
I'm so proud to be his wife—
But I'll have to stop my writing
Here to bake a nice, red pie.

"Since John he quit a-drinking?"
I can't say it times enough!
Ain't have and hasn't a liquor
As he would a poison stuff.
And what I say my prayers at night
As thankful as can be
I thank the Lord for getting of all—
Them three letters: T-E-A.

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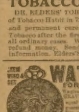

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I'm hoping for rain. We need water in this dry valley."

Huse talked on about ranch affairs, seemingly absorbed in business, and acting exactly as he would to an ordinary guest. Rackley shot inquisitive glances into the night, and, seeing nothing suspicious, reciprocated. The foreman was acting the part allotted to him, and he was not discouraged.

The second building was but a few yards away. They entered, Huse produced a light, conducted his companion to a room on the second floor, wished him a polite good night and withdrew.

Rackley was alone. Alone in a comfortable bedroom, something he had not seen before in years. He looked around, waited five minutes, extinguished the light and went to the window. All was still, and the only visible light was in the main house. He took a chair, meditated another five minutes, and then broke into a chuckle.

"So I can't escape?" he muttered. "The fate lady was wrong for once. Her armed men may ride the range and search, but I could pass them easily. She forgets who I am. As to that she knows no more than when we had not met, for I have made myself out her most unpopular guest. Still, that is just a sport with her. Rather mean, perhaps, but it suited my fancy. As for escaping—do I want to go?"

For a long time he sat motionless, thinking, gazing into the darkness. In the distance Tiger-foot Range lay quiet, to the eye only a black mass under the scarcely less black sky, but he knew the rocks, trees, valleys and hills that he loved were there. It was home, but it did not prove overwhelmingly alluring then.

He had something else to allure.

Burdilla was a rare curiosity to him—a puzzle. A something worth study; a cool young woman who elected to play with fire, and his copper.

"I'll wait until morning," he decided. "She may have told her help not to betray me to the officers, but I wouldn't give a whoop for their obedience. They would give me away in a jump if they took the notion. It's a risky game, but I rather want to learn why she is anxious to have me here, so I'll stay—awhile."

There was a slight mind bribe. Rackley looked and saw a man moving along the side of the building. In the poor light nothing more could be told. Meeting danger—perhaps treachery—the road-agent longed for a revolver, but he was unarmed. Believing himself invisible, he kept his place, but presently the prowler turned his face toward.

"That you, Adam Huse?" he asked.

"No," responded Rackley steadily.

"One of the hands?"

"Yes."


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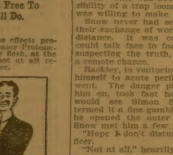


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"Will you be so good as to come down? I want to talk with you. I am Sheriff Stowe."

The man in the room heard without a start. It was unexpected, but no were many things in life. Then the law closed, remained set for a moment, and then reopened.

"I'll come down!" he coolly replied.

## CHAPTER IV.
### HE EARNS FIVE DOLLARS.

Rackley Gold rose and walked from the room and down the stairs. He had analyzed the tone and manner of the night-visitor as well as possible, and was the belief that Sheriff Stowe was acting with sincerity and did not know with whom he had exchanged words. This was not certain, and the possibility of a trap troubled him, but Rackley was willing to make the gamble.

Stowe never had seen him near by, and their exchange of words had been at a distance. It was conceivable that they could talk there without the sheriff suspecting the truth, yet, again, this was a remote chance.

Rackley, in venturing down, was exposing himself to acute peril. That was why he went. The danger pleased him. Stowe, on him on, took first hold of him. Yes, he would see Simon Stowe. Mentally, he termed it a fine gamble, and, thinking thus, he opened the outer door and went out. Snow met him a few yards off.

"Hope I don't disturb you," said the officer.

"Not at all," heartily responded the road-agent.

"You see, I wanted to talk with one of the Clarke outfit."

"Glad to hear we are so well thought of," answered Rackley.

"Oh! as that, I am after information. I'm hunting for Rackley Gold!"

"Have you found him?"

"No. I said I was hunting for him. I suspect that he is not far from here."

"About how far?"

"Oh!" replied Snow, "I haven't got it down so fine as that. In fact, I don't know that he is near, anyhow. A man was seen north of here, just before dark, riding fast on a bay horse. From his description I think it was Rackley Gold, and circumstances indicate that he may have entered upon the Clarke ranch-grounds."

"I doubt if he has been anybody riding as you say."

"Of course, he would not make himself public; if he's here he would hide, you know."

"Is that his way—hiding?" asked Rackley, with a measure of asperity.

"Frankly, I think so. Still, he may be here."

"Maybe, but how did he pass our armed outriders? That reminds me, how did you pass them? You are not a rider, but unless you had a warrant—but that doesn't signify. How did you pass the armed men?"

Snow answered:

"But orders are that nobody shall pass. You pretty nearly ran over me. Well, then, my friend, I'll say that I bribed a man to let me through, and that he is afraid to tell, and it will be worth cash to you if you don't say anything to Miss Clarke about it, now!"

"I'll see. Well, now you are here, what?"

"I want to make a thorough search, and as it's so infernal dark I can do it much better by a guide and lantern. This way. Will you oblige me by showing me around?"

"To find Rackley Gold?"

"Yes."

"Why, I'll do it, though I don't think you'll find him. Come on!"

The road-agent knew the way less well than the sheriff, but he assumed an air of confidence and led as directed. Snow had no intention of intruding where anybody slept, and they limited their search to barns, sheds and outbuildings. No Rackley was found, and Snow finally paused.

"I reckon Rackley Gold isn't here," he said quickly.

"He may be," replied Rackley. "Why not look further—perhaps as you see it?"

"No use. It's too confounded dark here, and as I don't want a general awakening on a slight clew, I'll call it in. But, say, my man, if I have nothing else I have an idea. Rackley Gold pleases me, and he may be a sometime venture right to this ranch. I would like a good man here to watch, study and report to me. Briefly, can I hire you?"

"To catch Rackley Gold?"

"Just so."

"Rather an unique proposition. I've heard of him, of course, but if anybody had told me I would engage to hunt for him I wouldn't have credited it. I have never been an arm of the law. My tastes," the road-agent added, with grim pleasantry, "are purely in the line of manhunting. But suppose I seize this Rackley Gold—what am I to do with him?"

"Do you know his reputation?"

"Yes."

"Would you dare engage him hand-to-hand? He's a desperate fighter."

"I think I am just as good a fighter as he."

"Good! I like your spirit. Now see here, Mr.—I lack your name—"

"Kidd, John Kidd."

"Well, Mr. Kidd, if you'll enter my service I will forward $10 every five dollars at the start, and add to it from time to time. Then there is the standing reward for his capture. It is five thousand dollars. Suppose," continued Snow, growing jocular, "that Rackley Gold was captured and hanged, what use would you make of the five thousand dollars?"

"The conundrum is so big it staggers my imagination," replied the road-agent frankly.

"Ha, ha—no doubt. Well, to present business. Here is five dollars, with more to follow. Some night I'll drop around again. Will you always occupy the room where I found you tonight?"

"I've occupied it ever since I've been on this ranch."

"Then I will signal under your window when I want you. Fix off now! Good night!"

The sheriff swung away with long strides. Rackley watched him out of sight, and then mechanically turned his gaze upon the bank note he still held.

"I feel mean to keep it," he muttered. "Aloft all the money has given me I ought to pay him, not he me. Also, I doubt if my help will be worth five dollars. Still, it's his proposal not mine. I'll keep the five."

Snow was fully gone. Rackley was alone under the clouded sky. He considered himself a fool to remain. Burdilla's drivers might be patrolling the outskirts. rifle and revolver ready for action, but he did not question his ability to pass them. Off to the west the hills lay black. It was home. He could be there by dawn, and next morning would find him in his favorite haunts.

Should he go?

He turned toward the hills, and then at the house where he believed Burdilla to be. One moment he hesitated; then he turned his feet west back to the room she had allotted to him.

Morning found him undisturbed by others and wholly composed of mind. Looking out he saw nothing unusual about, but nobody glanced his way. Possibly only Adam Huse knew where he was. Uncertain as to his line of conduct he remained inactive, but presently Huse came to summon him to breakfast. They ate together in a room on the lower floor, and there was no lack of attention on the part of the young agent, while the foreman was dustiness-like and natural of manner.

Shortly after the meal was dispatched Burdilla appeared at the door. She looked bright, energetic, full of life and unconcern. Her greeting was matter-of-fact and simple.

"Are you ready?" she then asked.

(Continued on page fifteen.)


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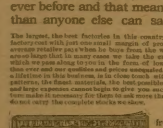


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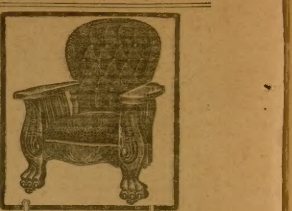

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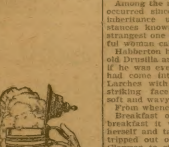


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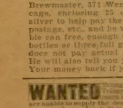

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By HARPER W. THORNTON

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CHAPTER V.
THE LITTLE DOOR.

IT WAS after the breakfast hour and Delos Habberton was along once more in the hall of Reverend Harvey at The Black Larches. Clawson had gone outdoors for a walk—to look the grounds over, he said—and Habberton wanted to be to himself to think.

Among the many strange events that had occurred since he took possession of his inheritance under the singular circumstances known to the reader, not the strangest one was the coming of the beautiful woman called Thaddora.

Habberton had first heard her name from old Drusilla and even then he had wondered if he was ever to encounter her. But she had come into his life—had invaded The Larches with her well molded form and striking face framed in chestnut hair, soft and wavy.

From whence had she come and why?

Breakfast over and what a singular breakfast it was! Thaddora had excused herself and taken her departure. She had tripped out of the diner leaving him and Clawson to stare stupidly at one another, each silently trying to solve the puzzle which had just been presented.

Habberton had nearly chased Kalmah and the Withered Hand out of his head and Thaddora had taken the place formerly occupied by them. No wonder he wanted to be alone for the purpose of intelligently tackling the new proposition.

He thought of summoning old Drusilla into his presence and questioning her the secret of the girl's coming. Once he went so far as to open the door of the dining car, but he drew back and thought on.

"I wonder if Reverend Harvey and diamonds is 'on deck' again," he suddenly ejaculated, leaving his chair.

He crossed the room to the curtained niche where he had twice been startled and lifted the curtain.

Once more the strange face of his deceased relative confronted him.

"It's the old gentleman," laughed Habberton, about to drop the curtain. "I must ask Drusilla some time who he was and where he came from."

I never saw my esteemed benefactor and I'm anxious to have a good idea of how he looked in life."

Then, as he turned back to his chair, his gaze happened to wander to one of the bookcases.

"The scene's come back," said he with a light cackle. "The Withered Hand has returned to the shelf."

Curiosity led him forward and he took from the shelf the particular volume which he had seen purporting to be the monstrous mummified hand the precious night. He carried it back to the table and resumed the chair.

It was a small book bound in dark sheep which showed signs of age and Habberton noticed that the leaves were edged with a most darkly yellow. Moreover, they were thick leaves, like some of the rare old books he had curiously examined on the libraries of the Old World. He turned the leaves listlessly, then brought the table before him. It was a work on the mystic religions of the East, a strange conglomeration of history and speculation.

All at once, however, Habberton uttered a light cry and his face was bowered over the book.

"What's this?" he exclaimed and then he read:

"It is asserted that after a thousand years of burial the High Priest with the Withered Hand shall come back and gather unto himself an army of the dead. He shall mark the blood on many a forehead."

"By George!" cried Habberton. "Here is something for Jack. Now, if the High Priest with the Withered Hand—"

A slight noise attracted his attention and he looked up.

Old Drusilla was standing in the doorway.

"Come in," said Habberton, closing the book. "Oh! Why, it's you!"

The face of the old woman indicated terror. Her little eyes were almost starting from their sockets and she was visibly tottering as if about to fall.

Fearing that she would crash helpless to the floor, Habberton with one bound reached her side.

"What is it?" he cried, catching her up and sustaining her. "Something has happened. Is it Thaddora?"

Drusilla's face was suddenly illuminated by a little smile at Habberton's concerned Habberton's gaze.

"Not yet—it is not Thaddora yet," she said. "It—it—Janus!"

"Where? Janus? What has happened to Janus?"

"The Ace of Diamonds!" and with this old Drusilla ordered eyes again closed.

"Where does Janus lodge?" asked Habberton.

"In the east wing—the little door at the end of the corridor—I went to hunt him up and—and—" She made it clear that she was to tell unhabit The Black Larches."

Habberton bore Drusilla, now on the eve of a real faint, to a couch at one side of the room and bounded into the hall.

"The door at the end of the corridor, she said," he cried and was on the staircase.

He had not seen the little door in the garden; he thought only of the new mystery which old Drusilla had opened to him and he was racing up the stair two steps at a bound when he suddenly halted and fell against the wall.

A figure in shining gray stood at the head of the flight. Had he gone on he would have collided with—Thaddora!

The girl was looking down, but not at him. Her face shot over his head and seemed to be riveted on the paneled entrance to the house. One hand was thrown out as if to steady herself by the wall above the staircase and the other was hidden in the folds of her drapery.

Habberton looked at her in silent amazement.

Suddenly she seemed to catch sight of him hugging the wall. Her gaze had dropped to his personality.

"Oh!" she cried sharply. "Forgive me, Mr. Habberton—I did not know—"

She was gone.

Habberton laughed to himself even though the incident sent his blood tingling through every vein. It was some time before he came back to himself.

He did not think of following the girl in gray, knowing that she was still in the house, but remembering old Drusilla's startling message, he bounded to the top of the staircase and looked down the east corridor.

"The last door!" he exclaimed. "I remember—the little door like the portals of a kennel. I'm to find Janus there—"

He paused to think for the first time of Jack since he had left the library. Why hadn't he sought his friend at first? If a new mystery confronted him Jack should be first on the ground while the trail was fresh.

Once, but it was for a moment only, he thought of going back for Clawson.

"No," he said, beating down the half formed resolution, "I will find Janus myself."

It did not take him long to reach the little door designated by the old woman whom he had left in the library. It was before him and he eagerly put forth his hand to fling it open.

Billets of morning light entered the corridor and rendered objects plain. Habberton did not expect to find anything but would find in the chamber beyond the door that he had yet explored that part of the premises.

He opened the door and plunged forward, his involuntary cry now sounding in a very small room staring at no object which lay across the floor underneath a little window unc urtained and very narrow.

It was the body of Janus.

Habberton had shut the door behind him and remembered having heard the lock click.

A man of courage under all circumstances, Delos Habberton was not overawed entirely beyond the pale of superstition.

He stood almost motionless and gazed at the sanctimous form on the cot, then he moved forward and bent over it.

That Janus was dead he knew at a glance. The little man who had carried his message to Jack had received the pale of mortality and perhaps had answered before the great Judge for "the deeds done in the body."

But this was not all Habberton saw. On the white forehead of the dead man was a mark which caused him to start back and shut his hands.

It was the Ace of Diamonds!

It glowed red before the dimmed eyes of the new heir; it seemed an orb itself, looking into the depths of his soul from its central position on the forehead. He expected to see the mark leap forward and leave its impression upon his own temples.

Sanity came back at last to the startled owner of The Black Larches.

"Work for Jack," flashed across his brain. "I'm lucky to have the experienced mystery solver in the house. This moment, then, is more of the Hindu's necromancy—it means the end of some high deed—it means the banishment of the dark skinned viper—"

Once more he leaned forward; he put out his hand to touch the dead Janus' forehead, but that moment it disappeared and the dead man's skin was as white as his own.

CHAPTER VI.
LONG KEPT SECRET.

Jack Clawson, returning from his rambles in the grounds, found Habberton in the library, for old Drusilla had recovered and slipped away. Habberton noticed a moment and then seated himself at the table, spying the open Bible which Reverend had left open.

He was suddenly startled by the sound of his name.

In a second he was at the foot of the staircase and when his name reached him once more in Habberton's well known tones, he sprang up the steps.

"Here! This way!" came down the corridor and Clawson was already in the room of the meager door.

"Oho!" he cried the moment he saw the body of Janus on the cot and then he turned and fell upon Habberton with a question in his eyes.

"He's just as I found him with one exception," explained the new-made.

"What is that?"

"The mark of the Ace of Diamonds was on his forehead, but it vanished when I went back in it."

"The devil!" ejaculated Clawson. "Some Oriental hocus-pocus, I presume. Have you seen Solidad?"

"No."

"How come you to find Janus here?"

"Through old Drusilla."

"And you have seen no living person but the old woman?"

Habberton thought of the girl—Thaddora—he had seen at the top of the stair, but why force her into this new chapter of mystery? Time enough yet for that.

"I saw no one but old Drusilla," he lied with all the coolness of the arch fiend.

Jack did not seem to have heard him. He was bending over the stiffened body on the cot and was oblivious to everything else. Habberton drew off a step and waited.

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Perhaps a spinster has refused more than one opportunity to make herself unhappy.

One nice thing about being rich is that people will know when you want to talk.

Sometimes it is the janitor who cleans out the bank and sometimes it is the cashier.

Having discovered a kindling-wood trust, the Government is about to touch a match to it.

Every time a woman takes a moonlight ride with her husband she tries to act respectfully.

When a woman gets her last year's hat made over, that is one secret she locks in her bosom for keeps.

It's easy to distinguish between a married man and a bachelor. The former always has an explanation ready.

It is to be hoped that miners and mine operators will get together before it comes time to start up the furnace in the fall.

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Members of the Italian royal family do not think it makes a princess out of Miss Gilkie to have a grandfather who once was for Vice-President.

Hearing of electricity as a motive power, New York is about to discard its horse cars. What a row it would be there for the epicures did the change but take place in Paris!

(Continued from page five.)

but along towards morning," Clawson said at last, but without looking up. "Some of the muscles have not taken on the rigidity of death."

"By what means think you, Janus left the world?" ventured Habberton.

"Not with his own consent! you may be sure of that, Delos. The Ace of Diamonds is not right here you say?" and Jack laid his index finger on the cold brow upon which a shunting ray from the narrow window fell.

"You touch the very spot," answered Habberton, "It was there as red as could be, but the moment I went to touch it it vanished as if some unseen sponge had wiped it away."

Clawson did not speak.

Habberton watched him for five minutes during which time he seemed to be turning over and over in his mind the perplexities of the dark puzzle by which they were confronted.

"You have heard nothing out of the ordinary?" suddenly asked Jack as suddenly looking up.

"No."

Habberton was lying again for he had heard the voice of Thaddeus.

"No voice of Janus, or any kind?"

"No."

Clawson turned once more to the body of the cot. He opened the shirt and gazed at the tattoo breast displayed by his action. Clothed like Habberton Habberton heard him say.

"This man was half beast."

"Perhaps Druscilla knows his history."

"Drusilla? Yes. We will find the old woman. Come! The dead is dead and the mystery is for the living."

Five minutes later they were once more in the library. Habberton started a little as his gaze fell upon the table where he had left the occult book. The volume was gone. His gaze wandered to the library shelf and at once found the old volume in its place. Perhaps Drusilla had restored it to its original position.

"Ring for the old woman," said Jack in tones of command.

Habberton pulled the crimson cord and the face of Marie appeared in the doorway.

"Drusilla—at once!" said Delos and Marie vanished.

Presently the patter of aged feet was heard and the old woman glided into the room, starting a trifle when she discovered that the new master of the Larches was not alone.

There was a questioning look in her eyes as she centered them upon Habberton and the look grew in intensity as she moved forward at his command.

"You know, Drusilla, this is my friend Jack Chawson," continued Habberton with a wave of the hand.

"One more, then," muttered the old woman.

"What's that?" cried Habberton. "One more for what?"

"I beg pardon, master. I am old and talk to myself on every occasion. Did I really speak?"

"Never mind," interjected Jack who was regarding Drusilla with his searching eyes. "I sometimes catch the same habit. It's not criminal, Delos," and then with the tips of faces he leaned toward Drusilla and protocoldit:

"Janus is dead, my good woman. But you knew that?"

Drusilla did not answer but looked at Habberton for encouragement.

"You may speak, Jack as you would to me," he said. "We have just come from the room of the dead, Janus."

"Yes, Janus is dead."

"You found him on the cot, my good mother?" Jack went on.

"I found Janus there when I went to awaken him. He was dead. On the cot? yes. The door was locked."

"Locked and the dead inside?" welled in horrified tones from Habberton's throat.

"I carry keys to all the rooms of the house," proceeded Drusilla, taking no notice of Habberton's ejaculation. "No, not to quite all. I have nothing to do with the chambers in the west wing."

The young men exchanged rapid glances and both said to themselves:

"The west wing is Kalmah's realm."

"Well, go on," resumed Jack. "You unlocked the little door?"

"Yes, sir."

"And found Janus dead on his cot. Was that all you saw?"

Again the old eyes in Drusilla's head flashed towards Habberton.

"Tell Jack everything," said Delos.

"I found on Janus' forehead the mark—the strange sign which, as I have told you, no one, I am sure, outside of your deceased relative."

"It was the Ace of Diamonds, eh?"

"Yes."

"You saw nothing more, good Drusilla?"

"Why should I look for anything more?" cried the old woman.

"Exactly," smiled Jack. "I'll admit that was quite enough for the moment. But, come now, tell me something about Janus."

"I'd rather not," almost wailed old Drusilla, clasping her hands in supplication.

Habberton saw his whim was devoid of color grew suddenly stern.

"It must, my good woman," he said. "Remember that I am master of this house now. I can command and my commands must be obeyed."

"Do not tear from my poor tortured heart the one secret I have long kept there," cried Drusilla. "I beg of you, good master, to let me carry it to my grave."

Habberton and Chawson exchanged looks of surprise. The latter stepped quickly forward, buried her face on the table between her wrinkled hands.

"Tell me!" he said, Habberton when the hand of Clawson fell upon his arm.

"Shell out with it," the latter said with a smile. "Women can't keep secrets. Let her have her way."


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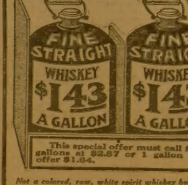


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They fell back and in silence watched the shivering figure of old Drusilla.

For two minutes longer it remained motionless at the table and then the head was slowly lifted.

"It's coming, the secret of a lifetime," whispered Jack.

"God pity old Drusilla!" murmured the sallen lips of the servant. "I give it up to you, young master. I loved Janus because—"

She paused in a last strenuous effort to retain the secret she had kept all these years.

"Because I gave him birth!" she ended and her voice died away in the saddened wail of maternity.

"I see," said Clawson, the first to speak. "Janus was your boy."

"My youngest and my best loved," came the reply. "Curses on the hand that robbed me of Janus! It will rob me of life, that I know, and you, young master and your friend there—and—Thaddora!"

She ceased and fell back, her dishevelled tresses, almost white, falling around her discolored neck and her scrawny hands clutched till the dark nails nearly cut marks in the darkish palms.

"We are here to avenge the death of Janus," said Jack, leaning forward. "I have come to clear up all the mysteries of 'The Black Larches.' You will help me, Mother Drusilla? You—"

She was on her feet now, looking the picture of an avenging nemesis, her black eyes ablaze with light and her hands high in air.

"You will avenge, you say?" rang from her throat. "You will clear up the mysteries of this house. No, not you will die by the same hands of your Your brows will wear the sign of the Ace of Diamonds. It was so said a thousand years ago!" and she fell to the floor at the feet of the two friends.

## CHAPTER VII.
### THE SIX MYSTICS.

Night fell once more over The Black Larches.

The body of Janus lay in the room of the little dead man and there, a gloomy figure stole down the narrow corridor and a head covered with white tresses was lowered over the still cot.

It was the head of old Drusilla and she was mourning for her last born whose identity she had kept with sacred zeal till the secret had been wrested from her by the persistence of Habberton and his mystery-solving friend.

Since his last appearance in the library nothing had been seen of Kalmah, the Hindu.

His dark, mystic sitt face had not crossed Habberton's path though he was quite certain that he still inhabited the west wing where in what old Janus had denominated the "sealed chamber." What dark mysteries did not those closed doors cover during the lifetime of his uncle Habberton did not know. If an attar to the strange gods of India had been exercised with its wailing and he doubted not these had—he had not seen it, and the fair face had not suggested an invasion of the place.

Habberton had not forgotten Drusilla's declaration that at times other dark faced men—Hindus all—had come to The Larches and he doubted not that this being true, they would come again.

On this night, for some reason which he did not see fit to make plain, Clawson had gone back to the real city and he, Habberton, was alone.

The air indoors was close.

Perplexed by the mysteries which had heaped down so suddenly upon him, following the evening his fortune, he had left abandoned the sultry library and stolen into the grounds that surrounded the house.

Old Titus Timpson, his deceased relative, had taken but little care of the house and grounds. Perhaps he had no time to waste up in the occult as to care little whether all went back, but that as it may, the surroundings of the place had been permitted to return almost to a wild state of nature which Habberton promised himself should be changed when he caught his secret within.

He had inspected the grounds casually at once, but he had noticed that a narrow path led from the front of the great house as the west wing towards the road which led into the city proper. At the time he had thought but little of this, but now, with the strange events in his mind, he began to see things in a different light.

Chance or fate led him to this particular spot and he found himself in a certain locality from which he could see the roof of the west wing loom between him and the sky.

The night was still, the slight wind that stole from the city did not quiver the leaves of the ghostly trees and no sound but that made by the city's hum, and it seemed but a faint echo, fell upon his ears.

Thaddora he had not seen since that strange hour before, since he was startled by the apparition on the staircase. If she was still in the house, and he doubted not that she was, she had kept aloof, frightened perhaps by the mysterious of it, and he fell to wondering whether he should ever encounter her again.

The whole side of the west wing were darkened.

A tall venerable birch almost touched the sill and seemed the abode of the ghostly, but Habberton did not think.

All at once one of the windows appeared in a glare of light. It happened that at this very moment the house was at the extreme in that direction and he started at sight of the window.

He had taken up his station unconsciously near the narrow path and had upon the appearance of the light he heard a slight sound behind him.

Drawing deeper into the shadows, and screening himself by the foliage, he held his breath. Something was coming down the pathway from direction of the city. He waited and saw.

He might have set foot in the pathway itself by throwing out a foot, so close was he to it, but he decided not.

Suddenly a human form came into view. Habberton almost let loose a cry, for it was a figure clad in white, turbaned and grotesque. As he gazed a second figure appeared, treading in the foot-tracks of the first and then another and another till he had counted six—all clad in the same white garments like the priests of some mystic Indian temple.

Not until the last solemn figure had passed and the regular breath seem to escape Habberton's body.

They were moving towards the house and in a few moments had to the west wing and hidden by, the shrubbery that intervened.

When the last one had filed past him Habberton gained his feet and crept softly down but it was now as dark as before. The beacon, if such it was, had disappeared.

Then it was the door of the "sealed chamber" that was opened to admit the six. Thus could reveal the weird mysteries of "The Black Larches."

A refined man he was almost racing back to the house itself.

Letting himself in with the lower rooms without noise he paused in the hallway and listened. Not a sound reached his ears.

He glided across the floor of the library which swam in darkness and found a drawer in which he knew Clawson had put a self-posited a revolver which he had carefully loaded.

Clutching it firmly, he went back into the hall and looked up the winding staircase.

This flight of steps divided the old house. The corridor which from the second floor stretched to the front of the west wing, but he had not explored it. Habberton resolved to do so now, and he began to climb to the mansion.

Clawson, if he had taken second thought he would have waited for Jack who had promised to return before morning, but engrossed as he was in his task he crept up the staircase and found himself invading the corridor.

He had not gone ten paces down the hall before he heard a cry that froze his blood, clutched his throat and forced him to a standstill.

No hand had done this, however, but a cry had.

It was a long piercing cry which died away in the innermost depths of his soul.

A cold sweat came out on Habberton's temples.

Had he been less courageous the weapon would have fallen from his hands, but he had come to discover, not to be forced from his purpose and he waited for what might arise.

There was no echo to that one lone cry. Habberton went on again till he felt that he must be near the long corridor and in the west wing itself.

He was debating what to do next, having halted for that purpose like a cautious explorer, when a ray of light fell across the floor some distance before him.

That it came from an opened door he well knew and he hugged the wall with stareful eyes and cocked revolver.

What if the head viper of them all—Kalmah—should come forth, even here felt his blood tingle at the very thought.

The following moment that very thing happened.

Into the hall stepped the dark demon of mystic India. He was not more than ten feet from the head of the stairs.

The light slanting upward revealed his whole figure and what a sight he presented.

He no longer wore the turban nor the long white gown. His body was bare and glistening from the waist up, a gray-red cloth was wrapped about his loins, his head, shaven to the top, was bare and on his feet were the ever present sandals of his race.

He reminded Habberton of the Indian jugglers he had seen in Brooklyn, the men who did the most unbelievable things in dark magic, and mingled with the deadly mysteries of the Eastern jungles as if they were the most harmless playthings in the world. Would Kalmah approach him? Would the Indian viper come into his clutches that he might thrust the weapon into his face and tell him that he had played his last game of sin and darkness in the house of the larches?

Kalmah remained motionless in the corridor for several minutes.

Habberton watched him like one in a trance, but he kept his wits about him.

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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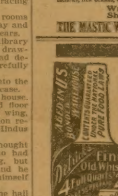


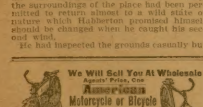

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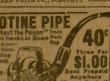

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### Discouraging.

She had expensive ideas, but the young man was madly in love with her.

"Dearest," he asked timidly, "when will you be my wife?"

"When you can write off a check for ten thousand," answered the cold and haughty beauty.

"But I cannot live without you. Don't you think your figures are rather high?"

"Oh, no. You know the cost of living is high these days."

Thus was another promising young man condemned to become a crusty bachelor.

### Tantalizing.

In searching for the location of the gas range Mr. Stubb had stumbled over the kitchen table.

"Oh, John," called Mrs. Stubb, sweetly, "I know what's the trouble. You need what they have on the battleships."

"What's that?" demanded Mr. Stubb, rubbing his bruised toe.

"Why, a range finder."

And what Mr. Stubb said about feminine wit used at wrong times would be a caution.

### A Necessary Preliminary.

The Guide—Before I take you out on this huntin' trip you'll have to execute a bond with proper see-curities.

The Hunter—A bond! What's that for?

The Guide—It's for $200 for th' dog an' $50 for me—an' I can't make it a cent less for any shooter that carries his gun in that easy fashion.

### Limit of Humiliation.

"What's the matter with Mickey? Every time he sees us kids coming he runs the other way."

"Mickey's so humiliated he's ashamed to show his face."

"What's he ashamed of?"

"Haven't you heard? At his big sister's wedding they made him a flower girl."

### His Idea.

The Millionaire—Riches, my man, do not bring happiness.

The Laborer—Maybe not, but it would be a heap of satisfaction to have a lot of money and be able to talk like that to a chap that hasn't got any.

## THE DAY OF THE SHORT MAN.

### Woman-Like.

"I hate him! I think he is the meanest man I ever met."

"Gracious, Jeanette! What is the trouble?"

"Why, he told me he loved me devotedly and I told him it would be impossible for me to love him in return. The poor fellow looked so downhearted I told him to try and forget me."

"Well?"

"Boo-hoo! He—he did."

### Question of Sex.

One—What is the difference between a fort and a fortress?

The Other—Don't know, unless it's more difficult to silence a fortress.

## Heroic, but Necessary.

Burglar (to father, trying to put the baby to sleep)—No noise or I will fire.

New Father—Let 'er go. It's the only thing that'll quiet the kid.

### A Difference.

Higgs—What's the best way to teach a woman to swim?

Haggs—Lead her into the water, put your arm securely about her waist, and——

Higgs—It's my mother-in-law.

Haggs—Then drop her.

### A Bargain.

The Man—No I don't want to buy a dog; what's he good for?

The Boy—Why—er—er—he's got a daisy tail to tie tin cans to.

## Strange Behavior.

First Bird—Look at the nice fat worms that boy is digging.

Second Bird—Yes, and he hasn't eaten any.

### Similarity.

Stubb—What's Jenks making all that fuss about?

Penn—His wife gave him a roll-top desk for a birthday present and he says it reminds him of her.

Stubb—In what way?

Penn—It won't shut up.

### A Speaking Likeness.

She—Did you ever see the Homer twins?

He—Yes.

She—Don't you think the boy is the picture of his father?

He—Yes; and I also think the girl is the phonograph of her mother.

### A Sure Sign.

Ashley—Kloudly hasn't smoked for a month.

Seymour—How do you know?

Ashley—It's a month since he asked me for a match.

### Not Always True.

"A stitch in time saves nine," repeated the student of odd sayings.

"It doesn't always save nine," objected the man with a hole in his pocket, "I lost only $8.50."

### On His Way.

Tom—She told me I was the light of her life.

Dick—That was going some.

Tom—Yes, but just then her old man came along and nearly put my light out.

### A Case for the S. P. C. A.

Jamsie—What you makin' such a fuss fer, kiddie?

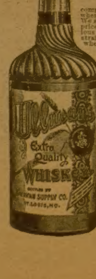
Kiddie—I bit into a worm in me apple.

Jamsie—Sh! Don't tell it so loud. Dere's an anticruelty officer over dere.

### Slight Jolt.

Harry—I always have my evening dinners served a la carte.

Grace—From one of those night lunch wagons, I suppose.

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# Frank Doulton at Sea;

## *Or, Meeting Wild Adventures*

By FRANK E. CHANNON

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Synopsis of Nos. 46 (Oct. 1). Sometimes can begin with these issue; back numbers can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER IV.

NEVER as long as he lives will Frank Doulton forget that night. Not a soul slept. All the men remained on deck. Those who had a fondness for darkness but coffee was served them, but they never quit their posts. The captain, grim and alert, remained at the wheel. Whether the wind had changed or not, the fact in which the Homer was sailing was different. Frank did not know, but certain it was that now she beat her way in short tacks against the wind, whereas previously she had been flying before it. Instinctively he knew that some one, some ship, was searching for them, the mysterious craft which had so nearly caught them before. It was as if two racers were blindfolded and feeling their way cautiously around, neither daring to run, but to breathe fast, the other should hear him. The very orders on board the brig were almost whispered. Only once were tones raised above a whisper. A man forward struck a match to light his pipe.

"Put out that light, you fool!" came the rasping voice of the captain, in an angry hiss, and the flame disappeared.

The cabin boy was relieved all that long night in serving coffee to the crew. The cook slept in his galley.

At last a faint streak of light in the east heralded the coming day. Anxiously the skippers swept the sea. Not a sail, not a sort was in sight. The Homer was alone upon the ocean.

After the exciting chase, life on board the brig became uneventful. Favoring winds drove her swiftly southward, and it was not until the end of the ninth week out that Frank, sitting lazily astride the spar, after serving supper that night (it was Sunday evening), he went, as usual, on deck, more to his great amusement, he saw less than a mile away the summit of a great mountain. As the sun sank behind the peaks, the fringe of shore was distinctly showing beneath, and the anchor of the Homer could be plainly heard.

For a moment the lad stood spellbound by the grand sight, then he dashed below to inform the cook.

"That's all right," chuckled the darky; "I thought you soon 'scover dat." Then he looked earnestly at Frank and helped: "Now, look here," he said, and led the way on deck again. He pointed over the rail into the depths of the water. "Now, what do you see?" he cried, and Frank's gaze followed his direction. There was only a watery gloom, a glimmer of something white, and it was gone. The boy looked inquiringly at the cook. "Well," came the injunction. Again the waves were ruffled, and once more there came that rush. The cook turned to look at Frank. "Sharkst" he said impressively; "dat's what dey are. Dey make berry good meal oh you. You not try now, eh? what?"

The cabin boy understood. The water was alive with man-eating sharks. The cook had taken this means of calling attention upon him the folly of an attempt to escape by swimming ashore. He was glad to thank the man, and endeavor to find out what kind of fish they were when, as he did so, a seaman came along the deck.

"Hey, kid, Cap'n wants yer in the cuddy," he said.

The lad at once made his way below. He found the skipper sitting at the table, a chart spread out before him. He looked up as Frank entered, and nodded curtly.

"Sit down, boy," he said, and indicated a place by his side at the table. Frank did as he was told. The skipper took up a pencil and pointed to a small spot upon the map. "Lat. 27 deg. 2 min. 45 sec. S., long. 12 deg. 18 min. 30 sec. W.," he roared, as if speaking to himself, but he was watching the cook's helper closely out of the corner of his eyes. Frank kept his gaze upon the chart. The captain resumed in his monotone: "Like nailed-up between the two great capes——" Then suddenly facing Frank, "Well, what do you think of the island, boy?" he blurted out.

"Is it an island, then?" stammered Frank.

"I rather think so, and a darned small one, too."

"It has a very high mountain on it, sir."

"Oh, just a matter of eight thousand feet or so," the captain agreed very friendly, and the lad plucked up courage to ask the oft repeated question as to the destination of the island.

"This is her port," replied the skipper. "How do you like it?"

"I have scarcely seen it yet, sir."

"Well, you'll get a chance to become better acquainted with it soon, for I intend to put you ashore here in charge of some cargo," the captain went on. "I trust to you, lad," the captain went on, endeavoring to look benevolent, "that I'll be a fine chance for a youngster like you."

Frank drew a long breath at the captain by this time.

"Going to put me ashore on the island, sir?" he gasped.

"That's what I am."

"And leave you there?"

"And leave you there——only for a spell, though," the old man added, as an evident afterthought.

Frank knew enough of the captain's disposition not to feel any confidence, so he waited for what was to come.

"You like the cook, I suppose, after waiting quite a long time. "I'm short handed on this brig. I left Bristol two men short, and I'll be darned if you up, I'd have bin a boy that way, too, but luckily for you I'll be only gone a short time, for that fool Dyer has to go overboard in that little squall, and left me one of the crew. Now I have to leave some goods here." The captain stopped and looked hard at the boy to note what effect his words had on him. Frank continued to gaze at his officer, and the main impression was of goods as well he called for later on—you understand? Well, I'm going to leave you in charge of 'em on this island, see?"

Frank's face was very white, as he hailed: "Are there any other people on this island, sir?"

"There are fifty-seven; leastways, there were when I was last here."

"Are—are they white, sir?"

The captain laughed loud and long: "Savages! Ha, ha, ha! Well, I guess not—but there, you'll be sure to become well acquainted with them. Now listen, boy: I'm going to put you ashore in charge of these cases you see in the hold. A ship, a steamer, will call for them in about a week. Maybe two weeks. All you got to do is to take the receipt for them, which the skipper of the steamer will give you, understand?"

Poor Frank was far from understanding. The captain looked at his blank face, and burst out laughing again. "Hang it! Can't you understand it?" he bellowed. "It's like this, young fellow: I'm going to make a connection with a vessel here, but five winds and other luck has brought me here three weeks before time! I don't propose to hang around waiting. I can be half way back to Bristol before the ship I'm to meet is here, and——"

"What's going to become of me?" burst out Frank.

"I'll pick you up on my next trip, stupid." "Will you? Is one thing for me, sir!"

"Depends on what it is—spit it out."

"Will you send a letter for me to have you get back to England?"

"After I've looked through it and if everything's all right."

"I shall only write in it that I am safe, and tell my parents where I am."

"You can cut that last part out—just tell 'em you're safe and well and will get home as soon as you can, see."

Frank considered a moment, then said: "All right, sir."

"I shall unload tonight, and get away by tomorrow's fore watch. I'll take you ashore with me and give you your instructions."

The captain waved his hand to show the interview was at an end. "Get your kit packed," he shouted, as the lad went out.

To explain matters to the cook; to place in a sack his few possessions, and shake hands with the second mate was the work of half an hour.

"You be all right," comforted the kindly darky, noticing the tears in the helper's eyes, "we soon come get you again, and de people dare a very fine lot; de mate, he says so." There was no time for further talk; the captain came swaggering along, his gig was being run out. "Come on, boy," he commanded; "scramble in," and next minute the boat was headed shorewards. The captain and Frank sat in the stern sheets; two men were at the oars, and the gig shot rapidly through the gently lapping waves. It was almost dark now. The captain waved a lantern, which the lad had provided himself. It was answered at once by a light from the nearing shore.

"Ahoy! Ahoy!" a voice sounded through the gloom, and "Ahoy! Ahoy!" roared back the captain.

A sandy beach spread itself out before them, and the boat was beached as it became big upon it. Four men rushed into the surf and hauled her up high and dry.

"Hathe!" said the captain, gruffly, and: "Do," replied all four of the strange men, touching their foreheads. "Is all fine time, capt," he remarked.

"Few days," replied the skipper, airily. "A few weeks, I should say! The Crow ain't no more than left."

"So" and the Homer's masted lifted his brows inquiringly.

"Left a man to her," explained the first speaker.

"Below water?"

"Aye, below."

"Could they fix her up here?"

"Soon!"

"Well, the stuff's comin' ashore tonight and I'm off in the morning. Now, then, up the way on! here's a kid here; he'll stop with it."

The strangers looked Frank over and two of them nodded to him. They led the way over the sandy stretches towards a low structure which loomed up out of the darkness. The captain followed, the door two flung open and the party entered.

"Sit down, there," said a voice, and half a dozen candles were soon illuminating the room. It was a large, low-roofed apartment, with a huge fireplace. It was furnished with solid-looking chairs and a big table.

The captain and the leader of the welcoming party sat down before this table; the other men disappeared. "Sit down, boy," invited the captain, pushing a chair forward. "Glim, I'll leave you in my cabin boy; he'll stay to get the papers; he's a good lad; make him comfortable."

"'Twasn't necessary for him to stay," demurred the man.

"I want it so," remarked the captain, shortly. "Where's you put the goods?"

"Jenkins Mac Donnell on his him up, and we can use him in the shearin' some."

"Captain laughed. "I'll warrant you'll use him all right," he remarked. "Now, you and Glass get out and bring in the goods. Glass: I want to speak to the boy some."

"You'd want some fresh meat and green stuff, I guess."

"Of course; I don't want to carry back a scurvy crew with me, you can bet."

"Bad as ever; they don't get none less." The man went out, and the skipper turned towards Frank.

"You'll find them all right," he remarked. "They are a queer people, aren't they?" suggested the lad.

"Queer!" that: kind of brown, eh?" and the captain laughed. "Now, boy," he continued, "stand still, there's a lad! I have for you again; get a receipt for this," and he thrust a long invoice into Frank's hand. "One black cask," he read, "contents." he remarked. "The Black Crow will call for them; he lives in Hope-in-Arden Hall; he'll be here in a week or so. Do you understand?" he asked, and Frank he all right. Keep the paper, though, that's for me, understand. Now, then, write that down, and then I'll dictate a letter when I reach Bristol Docks. Just tell your folks that all's well, but that my wheels are still there; leave the letter open, so I can see everything's all right." He pushed some paper and pencil over towards Frank, who made haste to write his first letter home. the skipper standing over him, waiting.

"Dear Father and Mother," he wrote, "I am safe and well. The Foley was overturned as I was rowing back from The Isle. I reached a log of wood and was carried out to sea. A brig, The Homer——"

"There, that will do," interrupted the master, snatching the writing and handing the lad another piece of paper.

Frank rewrote the epistle in silence until he came to the word "brig," when he looked up and said: "Well, what shall I tell them, sir?"

"Tell 'em a ship picked you up and was bound for the South Atlantic. Tell 'em the skipper couldn't put back, so offered you good wages to go on with him, and that he contracts to land you at Bristol Docks again in six months or so. Is your pocket?"

The boy finished the letter in the manner prescribed by the captain and then handed it to him. There were tears in his eyes as he said:

"You will be sure to post it, sir, won't you?"

"I parole will, boy; shake your mind easy."

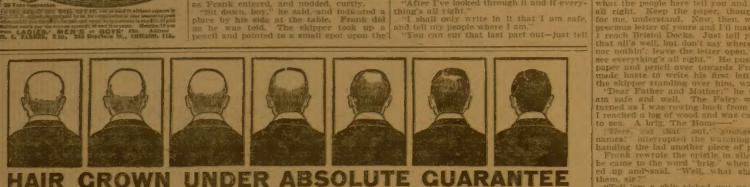
The man who had been called Glass, entered the room.

"Captain," he said, "I wish you'd come out here and see to things; one of them chests is stove open in the surf. The wind's rising a smartish bit, and you bear get your brig off the shore."

The wind was rising, and rising with incredible swiftness. The captain saw at a glance that there was no time to lose. He hustled the landing party on with their work; gave Frank a few parting instructions, and springing into his gig, was rowed to the brig.

CHAPTER V.

For a time the inhabitants of this island

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stood gazing into the blackness of the night after the departing visitor, but presently the flare of a rocket announced that the brig had been reached and boarded, and half an hour later yet another blue rocket told that the vessel had succeeded in beating out in the face of the approaching storm. The Homer had departed, and Frank Doulton was left upon a strange island in the midst of a strange people.

But it was that brief half hour during which he watched the departure of his late ship, there had occurred a great change in the lad. From a boy, he had grown into a man. He realised that for a time, at least, he was cast upon his own resources, and had only himself to rely upon. Always a strong lad physically, he was far dwarf intellectually. His life in the open, and his close association with the sea had bred in him a certain amount of self-reliance not usually found in a lad of his age. Under the loving care of his father and mother, and his tutor's watchful observation this self-reliance had remained dormant to a great extent; now it suddenly asserted itself, and the boy became a man. The skipper of the Homer had detected this trait in Frank, and for that reason had chosen him, in spite of his youth, to become a partner in the handling of the mysterious cargo which his ship had carried. To some extent he had taken Frank into confidence. The boy now knew that the brig had carried a consignment of seven thousand repeating rifles and considerable ammunition intended for the use of some "Patriots"—so the captain had designated them—in their struggle against "Tyrata" (another phrase of the captain's). He now knew that the steamer which had so nearly captured the Homer, had been dispatched by "enemies" of these "patriots", with orders to take her valuable cargo. The island upon which he now stood was "Tristan d'Acunha", which, as the captain had pointed out to him lay almost exactly between the Cape of Good Hope and the Great Horn of the South American continent. Here the cases containing the arms were to remain until called for by some vessel which would convey them to their final destination. Frank was to see to their proper delivery and to obtain a receipt for their turnover.

"Get the job properly done," the skipper had said, as he clapped Frank on the shoulder, "and it's fifty pounds in your pocket when I land safe in Rio Docks again."

The money had not appealed to the lad so much as had the sense of responsibility of these affairs, and now that his anxiety in regard to his parents' knowledge of his whereabouts was eased by the dispatch of the letter, he entered with zest into the adventure which now spread itself before him.

He looked around and found himself facing the man who had been introduced to him as "Sam Glass."

"Well, son," he remarked, speaking in very good English, "you had better come along with me and the party reached the top of the house, that most of them possessed light eyes. A very little of the negro showed in any of them, with the exception of their copper-mixed skin. Their other marks were those of the white man.

"Mrs. Domer, I've brought you a boarder," announced Mr. Glass, as he thrust Frank forward towards a motherly-looking woman, who came on Captain Jolley's brig, and is to remain until he takes him off again."

"What is your name, dear?" inquired the old lady, as she advanced and gave Frank a motherly hug.

Frank Doulton, ma'am."

And do you come from the old country?"

"Yes, ma'am, from Minebrow, in Devonshire."

"Well, now, sit ye down. Are you hungry, dear?

"I am hungry for anything except pork and hard tack," replied Frank, laughing.

"They are all the way when they have a ship; I'll soon fix you up, dear," and in half an hour the late cabin boy of the Homer was sitting down to the finest meal he had partaken of since he left his home. Fine, thick, buttered, boiled potatoes, brown bread, and best of all cream in the tea. What a change from the fiery fried meats and milkless coffee coupled with worm-eaten hardtack, which had been his portion during the long voyage from the Cape, the ocean soft bed and airy room in which he rested so comfortably after his meal, from the stuffy, roach-infested cupboard, which had been duly for a consignment of cargo. No wonder the boy felt like a new person when he arose the next morning, after a night of refreshing sleep.

The storm of the night had passed away, and the sun was shining brightly into Frank's room through the window of Frank's room. He heard the sound of voices coming from below. Quickly he sprang from his bed and dressed. The room seemed to the lad to be pleasing after the long days he had retained his sea-legs. It was some days before this sensation passed away. He descended the stairs. Two young fellows about his own age were seated at breakfast. Both were copper-colored, and both had the light blue eyes. This peculiarity of the islanders never ceased to be a source of wonderment to Frank. Mr. Domer came forward and took the boy forward to the two lads.

"These are my two boys," she said, proudly, and Frank shook hands with them. "This is Jerry, you can tell him from Sam because he isn't got any middle finger, if it wasn't for that I don't think I could tell 'em apart myself," and the old lady laughed, as she gave a playful push to the boy in front of spring. "Their father is dead," she continued. "He was drowned the night of the third wave. Sam was born the day after, and the old lady drew a chair up to the table.

The two lads who had been introduced as Sam and Jerry were seated at the table as we served. It was plain they were shy. Now and again one would push a dish towards Frank, and nod as if plainly inviting him to help himself, but not a word did either of them speak. Frank began to think they must be dumb. He was soon undeceived, however, for the boy on one of them commenced to talk at such a rate that it was with difficulty he could follow him. What was his name? Where had he come from? How long was he going to stay? Was he married? Had he any children? How old was he? These and a dozen other queries without the slightest pause. It was astonishing. He had no time to answer, before the door of the room was opened and Mr. Glass appeared.

"Good morning," he remarked, pleasantly. "I thought I would look in to find out how you were feeling after your night's rest, and to tell you that breakfast being finished, either you or Jerry will be required at the quarries today, so if she wishes it, they can show you around the island. I should like to look around. The cases are all in the frame hut, and have been all night. I've handed a large key to Frank.

It was plain that both the lads were very much pleased with the permission thus brought to them. A holiday seemed as much to be desired in this strange eastern island as in more thickly populated districts.

"We'll take you up the peak," Jerry said to Frank.

"All right, but I want to look over the boxes that were put ashore last night, before I start."

The boy checked them off with his invoice. All were there. One had been broken open in the surf, but its contents were all safe. The cases, a large lap under cover in a hut near the beach. In fact, it would have been hard to find a place that was far from the beach on the island upon which Frank found himself was certainly not of any size, and the greater part of it appeared to be nothing but barren rocks, almost uncultivable. The beach upon which he stood was but about three miles in length, and stopped abruptly about a mile and a half inland, forming a cliff apparently forming an insurmountable barrier. They towered away up until in the mass of clouds which hung over their summit.

The two lads, Sam and Jerry, were eager to start. A lunch had been prepared by Mrs. Domer, and each lad took his share. Some one of the lads, and the expedition started.

"Don't try to scale the Long Peak," shouted Mr. Glass as the boys started.

"All right, we won't," shouted Jerry, as he and Sam disappeared, and in a few minutes Frank, Sam and Jerry were at the boundary.

"We'll work around to the northwest and climb up by Jacob's Ladder, that'll bring us on the other side, and you'll be able to get a good view of the Long Peak from there."

"It looks jolly high," said Frank, who had never seen such a tall mountain before.

"It is. It's quite two thousand feet, and no one's ever been a-top of it yet—nor never will, I guess. I've been up to close on a couple of thousand feet from the top, but the last bit's a stiffish climb, I can tell you—you'll say so when you get to it."

Ah," chimed in Sam, "uncle says it's an old fire-mountain, and that some day it will spring into fire again, and then our island will be swallowed up."

"Where's your uncle?" asked Frank.

Why, him as just told us not to climb the Long Peak, to be sure.

"Oh, Mr. Glass."

Yes, him.

"He's our first uncle, but every man is our uncle, except the kids," explained Jerry.

"What!" exclaimed Frank, who was utter-


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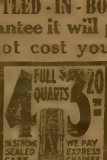


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# THE GHOST HUNTERS;

## *or, Solving the Mystery of Haunted Rock.*

By Colonel Morgan T. Salley.

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CHAPTER XIV.

JEALOUSY THAT KILLS.

OLD DAD PERKINS sat all night before his fireplace.

He was trying to understand the tremendous fact that John Henderson had turned against him—had given him four days to remove his still where the prying eyes of the ghost hunters might not find it—had threatened him in case he lifted a hand against the "dad-blamed furriners" from the city.

It was not a easy fact for the old man to understand.

"Dad" was not given to change. Within the limits of his apprehension he was a Jiant man, but it was difficult, almost impossible for him to change his point of view.

He had made liquor before the war, and he never would be able to see why he might not make liquor now.

He was of cast iron, which is a conservative metal. You could not reform it into a new shape, though you break it into bits. You must melt it with skimmers and fires before you can mold it.

Dad was trying to figure out a readjustment of his life, but his brain and heart would not respond. He was like a dumb man who walks and waits for speech.

His boys were afraid to speak to him. They wanted him to accept the fifteen hundred dollars offered him by John for the destruction of the still.

"We will take our share of the money and go to Texas," they planned during the night, and became quite excited as they discussed the future. Bud was to be a cowboy—Jim a railroad brakeman. They fondly imagined that after Dad had slept over it he would be open to reason.

But in the morning they found the old man still sitting before the hearth. He was grim, silent, and terrible. They crept away to the woods.

Sis, indeed, begged her father to come to breakfast. He looked at her dumbly. When she urged him he too left the house.

When he came back, John had already passed on his way to the mill, and Sis was lying on the bed, nursing her own jealous heartbreak. She pretended to be asleep, but there needed no precaution to hide her misery from her father's eyes.

He was still groping. When he finally reached the end of the blind trail he was tracing through his confusion, there would be a curious.

He would resign himself patiently to the inevitable, or else he would arouse himself to a destructive rage.

During the afternoon, as Sis watched him, she forgot her own misery in wondering at his abstraction.

All that afternoon he fought with himself.

And all that night. If he dozed in his chair by the fireplace, they would not say, but during the night none of them heard him move.

On the second morning the boys went away again, Sis carried her father a cup of coffee, he took it mechanically, but he would not respond to her attempts at conversation.

When Sis heard the sound of a horse's hoofs, she suggested that it was John.

She would not go to the door, but watched him through the window. He rode gallantly, in an easy, free canvassing, and he carried in his hand a bouquet of wild roses, still glistening and fragrant with the dew.

He stopped at the window, starting out at nothing, for a long time—so long, in fact that John came riding back from the mill.

And now Dorothy was with him. And Dorothy wore the roses at her belt. They were going to see the spot where the fairies were supposed to be, though Sis could not know that.

She saw how that they glanced curiously at the house, and that Dorothy laughed, and that a great wave of black hatred swept over her heart and brain.

She tried to turn away from the window, but the scene was fixed, and it went round and round.

When she fell with a crash and a little cry the old man woke up.

He gathered her up in his strong arms.

"What's the matter, honey, what's the matter?" he murmured. "Is my pore li'l gal been frettin' 'bout me? I'm mean with her, she never knowed it. There, there, Sis, it'll be all right."

He carried her to the bed and brought water, bathing her face with his rough hands. Presently she opened her eyes and looked at him, and saw the tenderness of his face.

"It's all right, honey. The ole man's gone ter quit. It's easy f'r me to give up, honey chile. I knowed you an' John's good friends, but I didn't know you loved him. I hadn't a-good-r to tell him, honey. Don't you worry about it, not a minute longer. You'll all be friends again, an' I can come here as much as he wants to."

Sis must have seen that her father had got hold of the wrong idea. He thought she was heartbroken because she feared for John's life. He had not seen the other girl—and the roses. He could not know that the undisciplined young soul was rent by jealousy.

"Don't never ask him to come here, Daddy," she cried. "I hate him. An' I hate that white-faced hussy that he's so crazy about —that perfessor's daughter that he goes ridin' with every day. They jist passed here, some, goin' up the road."

The old man was looking at her in amazement.

"Don't you understand?" she sobbed, "that's why he's turned agin us. It's the gal. He loves her. Oh, my God, I wisht I'd die!"

"I see it all, honey," he said. "That's what's been a-puzzlin' me.

He walked directly to the fireplace and from the gun rack he took down his Winchester.

"He jist went up the road, you say? Don't worry, honey, I'll git him."

CHAPTER XV.

IN FAIRYLAND.

"The fairies have come back," cried John delightedly, as though they had gone forever with the other sweet delusions of my childhood. But they have come back."

He laughed like a boy.

"I wish I had proof now. I can't see them, but I'm willing to believe they are here. This must be the most delightful spot in the world."

Dorothy, too, laughed; so infectious was his happiness.

They had dismounted in a little glen, hedged with immense rocks and broken with limestone ledges.

A silvery brook came creeping through the broken stones, above them, and below the fairy valley spread out into a tiny canon, perhaps twenty feet deep and fifty yards wide.

The stream had worn the rocks smooth, and white, leaping through the ages down one step after another, the series of waterfalls being known to the natives as pools.

The surrounding forest shut off the view of the near-by road, and the two were all alone. The horses, munching contentedly at the foliage at the bottom of the valley were tied, may have been wisely aware of the idyllic scene—for who knows so much—but they disturbed the young people no more than did the birds hopping themselves to the pools below.

"I know now why I always adored this spot," declared John.

"Why?" asked Dorothy, shyly. She could read the answer in his eyes, but she wanted, womanlike, to hear it spoken in words.

"Because you were coming, who knew everything, must have told me that sometime I should be here with you."

She was pleased.

"You know, I always dreamed of you, here—the ideal companion, though I had never had seen but who, I firmly believed, was somewhere in the world, and I used to come here, guzing dreamily down the canon.

Dorothy turned her eyes away.

"Oh," she exclaimed. "Look there. Now, he is gone."

She pointed excitedly through the trees.

"What was it—a fairy?"

"No; it was a man—a man with a gun."

"Then it wasn't a fairy—Dorothy. They never carry guns. They only carry bows and arrows, that is the love fairies do, and they shoot only the heart.

But Dorothy was vaguely troubled.

"I am sure I saw a man with a gun. In the road, perhaps. He was looking this way, just for an instant, and then the leaves covered him."

"It might have been a hunter passing," said John indifferently.

"What sort of a man is this old Dad Perkins?" she asked.

"He's a lanky, lean old man, who walks very much stooped. He cuts his hair off square behind and his beard off square in front, after a fashion of his own. If you ever see him, you will know him at once."

"Is he an enemy of yours?"

"Oh, I guess Dad is a little peeved just now. This ghost hunt has interfered with his business a little, and he blames me for it. But we've been the best of friends. I used to spend half my time there when I was a big boy. Dad can't stay mad at me long."


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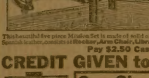

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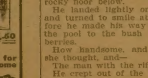

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"He has a daughter, father says."

"Oh, yes; Sis is a mountain pink, really. You must see her."

"She is beautiful, then?"

"As pretty as a wild flower, and as wild as a deer. She's a good girl, though."

"Oh," said Dorothy. Her face had grown a little hard. Something seemed to have disturbed their comradeship. She had forgotten the man in the gun, and was trying to picture to herself the girl who was as pretty as a flower—with whom John had spent half his time when he was a big boy. And she, Dorothy, had only known him a few days! It made no difference of course. It was nothing to her—nothing at all. She wouldn't be jealous of a girl she had never seen over man who was a mere stranger. It was ridiculous.

But the spell was broken—the fairies were all gone. They both felt it.

"Did you ever climb down into the ravine—when you were a boy?" asked Dorothy.

"Always, when I came here. It isn't so hard as it seems. There's a place just below where you can swing yourself down from a little crag. I'll show you."

"No, no; you might fall."

John laughed.

"I'm not. Those red berries on the little stunted tree leaning over the pool down there are ripe, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will get you some of them. They are service berries. They are very pretty, and I used to think they were good to eat."

He took off his coat and rolled it up into a cushion, placing it beside a cluster of low bushes.

"You sit here. Then you will be hidden from the rest, and perhaps the girls can't see you," he laughed. "But you will have a good view of the valley below, and you can behold me as I swing down in his celebrated imitation of a man climbing the Alps."

"Please be careful," she said, seating herself on the coat.

"There isn't a bit of danger. If there was, I wouldn't do it," he assured her. "My life has suddenly become very precious to me."

"Don't be ridiculous. Go on."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAN WITH THE GUN.

From her sheltered nook Dorothy watched the lithe young man clamber over and around the rocks until he was hidden from view.

Then he reappeared on a jutting rock which hung over the canon. He smiled and waved his hand, and she could hardly restrain a little cry of alarm as he swung himself over the crag and dropped to the rocky floor below.

He landed lightly on his feet, however, and turned to smile at her once more, before he made his way down the edge of the pool to the bush which bore the red berries.

How handsome, and gallant he looked, she thought, and—

The man with the rifle!

He crept out of the forest as silently as an Indian.

He was alongside of the canon below, just at the point where John descended.

It was old Dad Perkins beyond doubt, for his grizzled beard and hair were chopped off squarely, and he was bent and stooped.

His rifle was in his hands, his finger on the trigger. He looked up and down the ravine, but apparently did not see the girl half hidden behind the underbrush a hundred feet above him. But she could see his face distinctly. It was filled with the determination of bloodlust. Evidently he had seen John disappear in the gorge, and the hour of revenge was at hand.

Dorothy was spellbound with terror.

She tried to cry out, but found that she was speechless.

She knew that John's life was in danger—in imminent danger—and that she could not even cry out to warn him.

Yet what could he do, even if he knew that his enemy was upon him. He was unarmed and penned in the ravine while the other, from that vantage point above, could shoot down the helpless man.

Like a swiftly moving shadow, and as silent as a shadow, old Dad Perkins glided across the open space on the edge of the forest and disappeared behind the ledge of rocks.

An instant later she saw him emerge on the out-jutting crag. He threw himself at length upon the rock. The muzzle of his rifle was pointed at the young man below.

At the same instant John looked up, warned by that instinct which tells all men when death is upon them.

"Dad," they cried.

"I've got you now, John," said the old man, and his voice was shrill and piercing. It was carried clearly to the girl. "I've got you now, and there is no help for Sis—so may God Almighty have mercy on your soul, for you are a dead man."

Dorothy realized in a hundred life times within the space of a second.

It was as if the events of the years had ceased, and memory was no more. All the events of the past, and the present, the trifles of her childhood, everything that had ever happened to her, every thought and emotion she had experienced, were merged into the now.

And suddenly, swiftly, clearly as if it was a command laid upon her by the inexorable Lords of Life, she knew what to do.

She was no longer a trembling, terrified woman, but an instrument of fate.

Her eyes fell upon the automatic gun was in her bosom. She had carried it at her father's command ever since she had been in the hills.

With movements that were so quick an eye could scarcely have followed them, and yet with all the automatic precision of a fine machine, she took the gun from the breast of her riding habit.

Without waiting to take conscious aim, she fired.

Almost at the same moment the rifle of the old man was discharged.

Dorothy had the triumphant knowledge that she had fired first, and that her aim had been deadly.

She looked at John and saw that he was standing, unharmed but dazed in the rays.

But old Dad Perkins had not fared so well.

He had crumpled up on the crag, as you


**DRINK HABIT**

How Mrs. Mock Secretly Cured Husband.

RELIABLE, EASY METHOD.

To the Editor:

I want to tell all the readers of this paper that I discovered a genuine and perfect cure for constant liquor drinking. Mr. Mock had the habit which gradually grew worse. He couldn't leave the farm without getting his fill of liquor.

With the drink habit, there came rheumatism and catarrhal trouble. Then, also, his stomach was generally in bad condition. I had tried every means of curing him and had wasted a lot of money on preparations that I got from several firms, but to no purpose. He did not want to be cured. But at last I heard about the good that was being done by the remedy of Mr. Edward J. Woods, whose address is 534 Sixth avenue, 356 J, New York, N. Y., and wrote to him asking him about the remedy. I sent me free of cost, a very interesting book and then I got the preparations which I began to give secretly to Mr. Mock. The effect was magical. He quickly began to express his disgust for drinking and lost all desire for whisky, gin or other drinks. It is now months since he did so, and easily Mr. Mock was completely cured. He stays at home now at times when he used to be drinking in bar-rooms and he is an entirely changed man. It is indeed a miracle and been worked upon him until I told him the secret. The remedies had cured him. He was very grateful and now he realizes what it means to be sober. He is happy home now and so am I, as it means so much to me.

I know there are many other women who are discouraged about their husband's or son's drinking habit, but they ought to cheer up right away and write to Mr. Woods at the above mentioned address. He is a fine man, a confidential letter writer and a true friend. Please publish this. Mrs. Sarah Mock.

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have seen a bird or an animal, suddenly shot, collapse into shapelessness.

His rifle fell from his relaxed hands and rattled loudly on the rocks below.

Then old Dad Perkins himself slowly slid from his support and his inert body shot through the air and lay silent and motionless beside his gun on the floor of the ravine.

It seemed to Dorothy that he was a long time in falling, as if he settled down slowly, floating like a cloud, or as shapes sometimes appear to do in dreams.

She noted that his head was doubled up under his body, and that one of his arms stretched out limply till the knotted fingers rested in the edge of the pool, as if he were feeling of the water to test its temperature.

She slowly placed her little weapon back in the breast of her riding habit, and thought that she would get up.

But she could not take her eyes off that terrible body that lay by the edge of the pool.

It held with a fascination that seemed more than hypnotic, and as she gazed she suddenly became aware of the fact that it was receding from her.

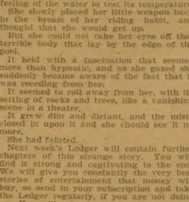
It seemed to roll away from her, with its setting of rocks and trees, like a vanishing scene in a theater.

It grew dim and distant, and the mists closed in upon it and she chould see it no more.

She had fainted.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this strange story. You will find it strong and captivating to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

## Unspecked.



The Idiot—There are no flies on me.

Sedate Girl—There are some things that even a fly will not stand for.

## The Captive Bandit.

(Continued from page four.)

"Quite so," he calmly replied.

"You do not ask, ready for what?"

"So you noticed that?" he answered, smiling.

"Ah!" she returned, non-committally. "Pray step to my side. Do you see two horses yonder? Very good. We are going to the town of Gideon Gap. I have business with Sheriff Snow, and want you to meet him."

"I think he will be pleased to see me," grimly observed the outlaw.

"Do you mean that you will go?"

"Certainly! It is natural to wish to make a social lion of a guest."

"We will see!"

She started toward the horses and Rackley followed. She talked as they went, stealing side-glances at her companion, but getting no reward, for he was absolutely calm. Reaching the horses he assisted her to gain the saddle, and his way of doing it gave her a new idea. The way was that of older communities, not the rough-and-ready style of the West. He mounted the second horse.

"Have you ever met Sheriff Snow?" she suddenly asked.

"Well, as to that," Rackley replied, "when he has been around I have usually been going the other way."

"Then you have never talked to him face to face?"

"At a distance, yes, but we have never been what might be called chummy."

"He will be glad to see you at his office."

"Possibly the pleasure will be mutual, though I never thought he had a very taking way."

"Sir!" Burdilla burst forth almost angrily. "I am not joking about going to see him. Do you really mean that you will accompany me?"

"If you wish it, yes."

"Have you no regard for your life?"

"I rank it one hundred per cent or more."

"And yet you, Rackley Gold, will go to Gideon Gap, and into the presence of Sheriff Snow?"

"If you say so!"

Burdilla was silent, but she eyed him with her angry mood still in full force. She knew that his appearance in the town would be the beginning of an upheaval, and that the miners would leap at the chance to settle with the road-agent as they longed to settle with him. He must know it, too, and it was exasperating to see him so composed. She longed to break down the calm he had exhibited from the first, but the calm was unbroken.

While she surveyed him so severely, their horses standing side by side and only waiting for the word to start, a sound at a short distance came to her hearing. She noted it and turned her regard elsewhere. One of her cowboys was sweeping toward them as fast as his horse could go. Accustomed to many troubles in her business life, she read a warning in his manner and gave attention only to him.

He came nearer, reached her presence and reined in his horse.

"The devil's to pay!" he exclaimed swiftly.

"Which devil now?" she asked peevishly.

"None of our old enemies," explained the man. "You know I've been to Clover Valley. I drank in some news and managed to get here to warn you. An officer and posse are coming to levy on this ranch and its critters."

"What for?"

"Maybe you will understand, though I don't. Damon, the officer, told folks at Clover Valley your father had been a partner in a mine, somewhere, and that there had been fraud, and Mr. Clarke's property was to be seized."

Rackley Gold, watching both his companions, saw Burdilla change color and seem to wilt under a blow. Evidently there was no surprise for her, but she lost nerve at once.

"This means ruin!" she faltered.

This dramatic story will be continued in next week's Ledger. Strange things happen. If you like the Ledger, and we feel sure you do, we would like to have you send in a subscription and take it regularly. A great many thrilling and unusual stories will appear during the coming year. You will find it a weekly treat, hence you had better send in your subscription now. Let us hear from you.

## The Withered Hand.

(Continued from page seven.)

All at once one of the hands of the East Indian was lifted to the ceiling and then Habberton saw that it clutched the black handle of a long bladed knife—a blade that was curiously twisted like a Malay creese.

All at once a wild thought flashed like a train of powder through the American's brain.

There was to be another sacrifice in that old house.

The Hindus had not gathered for an honest purpose. No doubt Kalmah had emerged from the "sealed chamber" and that back there were his mystic companions waiting for the new victim.

But the maker of the lone cry? What had become of that person?

Kalmah seemed to take delight in holding aloft the long bladed knife. It seemed to Habberton that he would never drop that sinewy arm, but all at once it fell to his side. Before the half terrified watcher could take a second breath Kalmah vanished back in the room and the door was closed.

"Now for the denouement!" cried Delos Habberton and the next second he was at the forbidden door itself.

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## The Bombardment.

Marjorie—And no sooner had the rice hit the groom than he fell into the arms of his bride—unconscious.

Mame—Heavens! How could rice knock him unconscious?

Marjorie—A rejected suitor was hidden behind a tree and threw it in five-pound sacks.

## Didn't Mention Name.

A colored woman presented herself the other day in an Equal Suffrage State at the place of registration to qualify for the casting of her vote upon the school question at the next election.

"With what political party do you affiliate?" inquired the clerk of the unaccustomed applicant, using the prescribed formula.

The dusky "lady" blushed, all coyness and confusion. "Is I 'bliged to answer that there question?"

"Certainly; the law requires it."

"Then," retreating in dismay, "I don't believe I'll vote, 'case I'd hate to have to mention the party's name. He's one of the nicest gent-mums in town."


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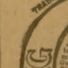

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**A QUERY.**

When I don't want to go to bed
My mamma puts me on the head
And says I am too little yet
To sit up when the lights are lit.

But when I hurt myself, you see,
She always takes me on her knee
And hugs me up and says, "Oh, de,
My man is much too big to cry."

And so you see it puzzles me
To know the reason why
I'm still too small to sit up late
But much too big to cry.

**Composition.**

There was once a little girl who wished to write a composition. At least, she didn't wish to, but she couldn't help it, because her teacher said a composition was to be written. The little girl got out all her pencils and sharpened them carefully and ruled neat margins down the side of her paper and then gave a great deep sigh and looked out of the window.

"I don't know what to write about," she said, just as you and every child have said a hundred times. And her mother said, "Write about what you see."

"I see the willow tree," said the little girl, "but I can't write much about that. Well, perhaps I can start with it."

So she looked hard at the willow tree and wrote a line about how she loved it because she had always climbed in it ever since the beginning of time. And she wrote another line or two about how bright the leaves looked where the sun touched them and how gray they looked in the shadow and then she told how the wind made them sway like long fringe. And she told about how dark the trunk was back of the leaves, and how it bumped out curiously in places, where straight willow shafts shot out and about the grasses that grew around the foot. And she was just finishing a description of how it looked in the rain, when her mother, who had gone out, came back and asked how the composition was getting on.

"Why, it is all done," said the little girl. "I don't think I'll ever be afraid of compositions any more. Next time I'll write about the apple tree, and then I'll begin on Mr. Thompson's wood, and that will last me until I'm grown up."

**Out of the Mouths of Babes.**

Small Bobby (at dinner)—Mamma, did God make this fish?

Mamma—Yes, dear.

Small Bobby—Well, I don't see why He put so many splinters in it.

Small Edna's father was talking with a man at the gate and she had told him several times that dinner was ready, but he paid no attention to her. Finally she said, "Papa, if you don't come to dinner the ice cream will all get cold."

Harry's mother took him to a dentist to have a tooth drawn. After it was extracted, "Never mind, my boy," said the dentist, "it will grow again."

"W-will they g-grow in a-again before d-dinner?" sobbed the little fellow.

**Got. Results.**

A mouse was large enough to free a lion from the ropes that bound him, as the old fable tells, and another mouse was large enough to throw a veil of darkness over the city of Beloit, Wis., for the matter of an hour. The mouse got into the main fuse box, where it had no business, and made the fuse blow out. That shut off all the electric power until the workmen could put in another fuse, and while they were working the streets of the city were dark.

**THE OUTPOST.**

The sweet west wind, the prairie school
A break in the yellow wheat.
The prairie trail that wanders by to the town
Is over the hill and out of sight.
A trail with never an end at all to the
vagrant children's feet.

A rain-washed sky, the morning sun, a
laugh along the trail.
A call so clear as a thrush's note, the
clink of a dinner-pail.
Hark to the bride, coming fast through
the future's rending veils!

Here a little patch of well-trampled
earth, a saucy gopher near.
And teacher waiting on the steps, her
kind eyes brave and clear.
A rough-cut pole where the flag flies up
to a shrill-voiced children's cheer.

An open door where the breeze steals in
and by and by the sun—
And one and one are two, you know,
that's how the world is won.
For two and two make four—ask me,
how quickly school is done!

The frost, the snow? The prairie school
when the wild north wind breaks free.
A little dot on the white, white lea as wide
as eye can see.
A little bit in the world. Always Was on the
field of the great To Be.

So lies the outpost of the world! The
foreguard of an age
Whose every destiny we know, whose
strength no man can gauge.
The writing of an unseen hand upon an
unmarked page!

**They Were Hungry.**

Skip went fishing one day a while ago. He caught one fish, though it got away and he had many bites that he could not count them. Skip is an Irish terrier, and the place where he went fishing is the trout hatchery near Skelpenton, N. J. Here trout are reared along until they become fish, and the fish are kept in tanks until they can be put in rivers and brooks for fishermen. Skip did not want to wait that long, and so he jumped into one of the tanks, where there were three thousand young trout about the size of minnows. He started to skin back with one of the three thousand in his mouth. Skip would not have had any trouble if the other fish had not been as hungry as he. As he had begun to eat one of them they felt that they could not be scolded for beginning to eat him, and so they started in. Skip dipped his fish as soon as the trout all began biting him, and he tried to get to shore, but the fish pressed around him, and he could not move. There would not have much left of him if his master had not come along and rescued him.

**A MISTAKE.**

We have heard, "Well begun
Is always half done."
I wonder if this can be true?
Though the maxim is sound,
I sometimes have found
That the other half's harder to do.

Perhaps if we tried
To lay one thing aside
Before we begin something new,
Some truth there might be
Though one cannot but see
That the well-finished tasks would be few.

But think of the things
That each moment brings
For one busy person to do.
If they've only begun,
When, under the sun,
Should we ever find time to get through?

**Whales.**

The sailor on the schooner Ella T. Davenport had a continuous shower bath while four days out from Key West, number 10 Philadelphia from Jacksonville. Spouts flew over the schooner's decks even when the sea was perfectly calm. You see the Ella had the fortune to run into a part of the ocean that was at that particular minute densely populated with whales, and the whales were in a playful mood. There was a great herd of them, new whales and calves and young bulls and one great, old bull that was as large as a mastodon. There were about seventy-five of them in all, the sailors say, and they kept the ocean white all around the schooner. They tumbled about on the surface, dived under the schooner and occupied their backs on the keel, and kept the air full of sprays. They stayed with the Ella for four hours, and kept steadily went under water. When they came to the surface they usually were half a mile away, and headed toward the south, as if they smelled something to eat down among the West India Islands.

**WHY?**

My pussy runs and will not stop
And climbs up in the maple tree!
She sits up in the very top
And looks at all that she can see.

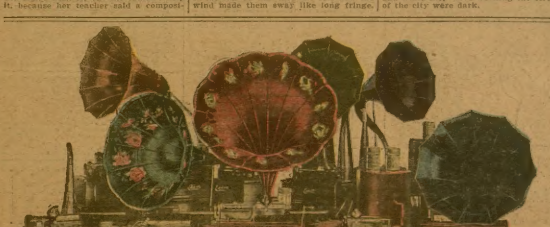
And if I stand below and call,
She cries and cries there in the sun,
But never moves or comes at all.
I wonder why she thinks it's fun!

I wonder why she climbs so high.
Up where the branches are so small.
She's so afraid I makes a cry,
And I'm afraid she'll have a fall.

James has to bring the ladder out
To take her down for me; and then
As soon as I am all about
My pussy climbs the trees again.

**HIS THOUGHT.**

"Why do you stare at me, my dear?"
Said Mr. Jones, "Do I look queer?"
"I was only trying to see," said John,
"The string that sister says you're on."



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